

“He Came to Teach You Your Religion”

The Hadith of the Angel Gabriel
Explaining the Foundations of
Islam, *Imaan* and *Ihsaan*

By
Jamaal al-Din M. Zarabozo

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Preface

Verily, all praise is due to Allah. We praise Him, seek His help and ask for His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil in our own souls and from our sinful deeds. Whoever Allah guides, no one can mislead. And whoever Allah allows to go astray, no one can guide. I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, the One, having no partner. And I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger. O believers! Have fear of Allah according to His right and die not save as Muslims. O mankind! Have fear of your Lord, the One who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and from them spread many men and women. And fear Allah from whom you demand your mutual rights and [do not cut off] ties of kinship. Surely, Allah is Ever an All-Watcher over you. O Believers! Have fear of Allah and always speak the truth. He will direct you to righteous deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has indeed achieved a great achievement.

To proceed: Verily, the truest speech is the Book of Allah. The best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad. The worst affairs are the innovated ones. Every innovated matter is a heresy. And every heresy is misguidance. And every misguidance is in the Hell-fire.

I thank Allah for the opportunity and ability to complete this work. I pray that He accepts this work from me and forgives me for any mistakes and errors that have occurred herein.

There are many people that I would like to thank for their help in this particular work. First, I must express my thanks to Dr. Mukhtar Curtis, Kamil Mufti and my wife Zainab for reviewing and commenting upon earlier versions of the manuscript. Their comments and corrections have been very helpful. I would also like to express my gratitude to those brothers and sisters of the Islamic Center of Boulder who attended the lectures based on this book. Their comments and discussions often added important insight or questions that needed to be addressed.

There are numerous others who are always deserving of mention in any of my books. Allah has blessed me by their company, encouragement, help and guidance throughout the years. I pray that Allah rewards all of them greatly. These people include but are not limited to: Nahar al-Rashid, Humaidan al-Turki, Said Lahrichi, Muhammad al-Osimi, Fahd al-Yahya, Hamad al-Shaikh, Ahmad al-Teraiqi, Muhammad Tahlawi and Jaafar Sheikh Idris. Of course, my wife deserves special mention for all of her years of encouragement, help and patience.

As mentioned in the introduction, this book is only a small portion of the larger, *Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi*. It was decided to publish this hadith separately, as well as in the larger work, due to its greater mass appeal. I pray that Allah makes it easy for us to complete the larger work soon.

I pray that this work is beneficial to those who read it. If anyone has any comments, corrections or suggestions for this work, they should feel free to contact me through the publisher.

Jamaal Zarabozo
Boulder, CO
U.S.A.
October 20, 1997

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This hadith is the second hadith in al-Nawawi's famous collection of forty hadith. This author is currently finishing an extensive commentary on that work. It was felt that this particular hadith, which covers the foundation of Islam and faith, is so important that it should also be published on its own.¹

¹ Some of the sections that are more appropriate for the larger, more detailed work were deleted from this work. Furthermore, this publication is actually a combination of the author's commentary to Hadith #2 and Hadith #3 from al-Nawawi's collection. The value given this hadith can be seen in the fact that this is at least the eighth book written solely on this one hadith. Al-Nafazi (d. 684 A.H.), al-Tarsoosi (c. 1120 A.H.), ibn Taahir (d. 1241), ibn al-Haaj al-Madani (d. 1378), ibn al-Uthaimin, al-Hilaali and Salaam have all written books on this hadith. For information about the first six of those books, see Yusuf al-Ateeq, *al-Tareef bima Ufird min al-Abadeeth bi-l-Tasneef* (Riyadh: Dar al-Samee, 1997), pp. 58-59. Salaam's book shall be quoted later in this work.

The Text of The Hadith of Angel Jibreel

عن عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَيْضًا قَالَ بَيْنَمَا نَحْنُ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ إِذْ طَلَعَ عَلَيْنَا رَجُلٌ شَدِيدُ بَيَاضِ الثِّيَابِ شَدِيدُ سَوَادِ الشَّعْرِ لَا يَرَى عَلَيْهِ أَثَرُ السَّفَرِ وَلَا يَعْرِفُهُ مِنَّا أَحَدٌ حَتَّى جَلَسَ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَأَسْنَدَ رُكْبَتَيْهِ إِلَى رُكْبَتَيْهِ وَوَضَعَ كَفَيْهِ عَلَى فَخْذَيْهِ وَقَالَ يَا مُحَمَّدُ أَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِسْلَامِ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْإِسْلَامُ أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَتُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ وَتُؤْتِيَ الزَّكَاةَ وَتَصُومَ رَمَضَانَ وَتَحُجَّ الْبَيْتَ إِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا قَالَ صَدَقْتَ قَالَ فَعَجَبْنَا لَهُ يَسْأَلُهُ وَيُصَدِّقُهُ قَالَ فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِيمَانِ قَالَ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ

وَتُؤْمِنَ بِالْقَدَرِ خَيْرِهِ وَشَرِّهِ قَالَ صَدَقْتَ قَالَ فَأَخْبِرْنِي
عَنِ الْإِحْسَانِ قَالَ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ لَمْ
تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ قَالَ فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ السَّاعَةِ قَالَ
مَا الْمَسْئُولُ عَنْهَا بِأَعْلَمَ مِنَ السَّائِلِ قَالَ فَأَخْبِرْنِي
عَنْ أَمَارَتِهَا قَالَ أَنْ تَلِدَ الْأُمَّةُ رَبَّتَهَا وَأَنْ تَرَى
الْحَفَاةَ الْعُرَاةَ رِعَاءَ الشَّاءِ يَتَطَاوَلُونَ فِي الْبُنْيَانِ
قَالَ ثُمَّ انْطَلَقَ فَلَبِثْتُ مَلِيًّا ثُمَّ قَالَ يَا عُمَرُ أَتَدْرِي مَنْ
السَّائِلُ قُلْتُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ قَالَ فَإِنَّهُ جِبْرِيلُ
أَتَاكُمْ يُعَلِّمُكُمْ دِينَكُمْ

On the authority of Umar who said: One day while we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), there came before us a man with extremely white clothing and extremely black hair. There were no signs of travel on him and none of us knew him. He [came and] sat next to the Prophet (peace be upon him). He supported his knees up against the knees of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and put his hands on his thighs. He said, "O Muhammad, tell me about Islam." The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Islam is to testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, to establish the prayers, to pay the zakat, to fast [the month of] Ramadhan, and

to make the pilgrimage to the House if you have the means to do so." He said, "You have spoken truthfully [or correctly]." We were amazed that he asks the question and then he says that he had spoken truthfully. He said, "Tell me about *Imaan* (faith)." He [the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)] responded, "It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day and to believe in the divine decree, [both] the good and the evil thereof." He said, "You have spoken truthfully." He said, "Tell me about *al-Ihsaan* (goodness)." He [the Prophet] answered, "It is that you worship Allah as if you see Him. And even though you do not see Him, [you know] He sees you." He said, "Tell me about [the time of] the Hour." He [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] answered, "The one being asked does not know more than the one asking." He said, "Tell me about its signs." He answered, "The slave-girl shall give birth to her master¹; and you will see the barefooted, scantily-clothed, destitute shepherds competing in constructing lofty buildings." Then he went away. I stayed for a long time. Then he [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] said, "O Umar, do you know who the questioner was?" I said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said, "It was [the Angel] Gabriel who came to teach you your religion."

¹ The text may be understood as meaning "female master" but most commentators, based on other narrations of the hadith, understand it to be a generic reference to "master".

This hadith from Umar ibn al-Khattab was recorded by Muslim¹, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasai, ibn Majah, Ahmad, Abu Dawud, al-Baihaqi, ibn Hibban, ibn Khuzaima, al-Bazaar, Abu Yala, al-Daraqutni and a number of others.²

The scholars of hadith differentiate hadith by their texts as well as by the Companions who narrated the hadith. This particular hadith has also been narrated through acceptable chains from the Companions Abu Huraira, ibn Umar, ibn Masud and al-Harith al-Ashari. The narration from Abu Huraira has been recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim, ibn Majah, ibn Abu Shaiba, ibn Hibban and others.³

The Circumstances Behind the Hadith

In one of the narrations in *Sahih Muslim*, this hadith of Gabriel begins in the following manner:

Abu Huraira narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Ask me [about matters related to the religion]." However, the people abstained from doing so because they were overawed out of profound respect for him. In the

¹ By studying the chains and texts of this hadith and how Imam Muslim presented them in his *Sahih*, one would appreciate the exactness and detail that Imam Muslim has demonstrated. Many such important points have been highlighted by al-Nawawi in his commentary to *Sahih Muslim*. See Yahya al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih Muslim* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 151-152.

² Ibn Hajr points out that the reason that al-Bukhari did not record the narration from Umar ibn al-Khattab is that there was some difference of opinion concerning the acceptability of some of its narrators. [See Ahmad ibn Hajr, *Fath al-Baari bi-Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* (Makkah: al-Maktabah al-Tijariyah, 1993), vol. 1, p. 159.] Hence, as was his custom, al-Bukhari, even if he accepted those narrators, did not record this hadith in order to avoid any question about the hadith of his *Sahih*. However, Muslim's approach was to record such narrations in order to demonstrate that they are authentic and that the criticisms of them are not valid.

³ Cf., Fauzi ibn Muhammad, *al-Adhwaa al-Samaawiyah fi Takhreej Ahadeeth al-Arbaeen al-Nawaiyah* (Amman, Jordan: al-Maktabah al-Islamiyah, 1413 A.H.), pp. 52-55.

meanwhile a man came there and sat near his knees and said, "Messenger of Allah, what is Islam?"...¹

According to al-Ubayy, the reason the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Ask me," is because they were asking many questions and the Prophet (peace be upon him) realized that some were asking obstinately. Therefore, he became angry and said, "Ask me, ask me, for, by Allah, you will not ask me about anything except that I shall tell you about it as long as I am standing in this place."² After hearing and seeing this, the people became fearful and refrained from asking any questions. When the people refrained from asking questions, Allah sent the angel Gabriel to put these important questions to the Prophet (peace be upon him).³

Al-Sanusi adds that such questions do not go against the prohibition of asking questions. Actually, one must ask these types of questions because the answers to them are needed. Hence, this is an application of the Quranic verse,

فَسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ

لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

"So ask of those who know the Scripture, if you know not" (*al-Nahl* 43).⁴

In other words, there is a type of questioning that should be avoided and a type of questioning that is commanded. Questions of a useless nature or of a purely theoretical nature with no benefit to them are to be avoided. Questions for which answers are truly needed must be

¹ See Abdul Hameed Siddiqi, trans., *Sahih Muslim*, (Beirut: Dar al-Arabia, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 4.

² Actually, al-Ubayy is referring to another hadith in *Sahih Muslim*.

³ Abu Abdullah al-Ubayy, *Sharh Sahih Muslim* (Riyadh: Maktaba Tabariyyah, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 77-78.

⁴ Muhammad al-Sanusi, *Sharh al-Sanusi*, on the margin of al-Ubayy, vol. 1, p. 77.